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theories, as a plea for a thoroughly genetic as distinguished from a merely descriptive or atomistic treatment of biblical theology, Schweitzer's book is of great value. It serves, moreover, to remind us how thoroughly biblical theology and dogmatics have become divorced. Such a book could hardly have been written until each felt itself quite absolved from the obligation to

agree with the other in results reached. We shall wait with interest the appearance of the succeeding volume in which Schweitzer will turn from criticism to construction, but with a strong suspicion, based on the forecast of its conclusions which the present volume gives, that Schweitzer's successor in the office of critic will deal with him much as he has dealt with his predecessors.

BOOK NOTICES

The Fundamental Christian Faith. The Origin, History, and Interpretation of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. By Charles A. Briggs, D.D. New York: Scribner, 1913. Pp. x+332. \$1.50.

For some years Dr. Briggs has made a specialty of the study and interpretation of the doctrinal symbols of the Christian church, employing in his investigations the methods of modern historical criticism. He emphasizes that we must apply the same principles of criticism and interpretation to the creeds as to the Bible itself. These creeds, or statements of belief, have a definite, historic meaning, which we should endeavor to ascertain and set forth. In the present volume, this task is essayed in relation to the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds.

Along with its general purpose as a historical study, the book has the practical, concrete aim of providing a basis for church unity by putting on exhibit, before the churches of today, the credal platforms upon which the church of the early centuries held together. Accordingly, Professor Briggs classifies the tendencies in present-day theology in a way which, if true, is favorable to this aim (pp. vii, viii). He seeks to distinguish, first, the "reactionary" tendency, which still insists upon the whole doctrine of the confessions of faith of the seventeenth century, at the cost of the perpetuation of theological warfare; second, the "radical" tendency, which would do away with all credal statements, and construct an eclectic theology out of a comparative study of all religions and in the form of recent undigested philosophical speculations; third, the "wholesome irenic" tendency, which seeks to reunite the separated churches on the basis of the fundamental principles of historical Christianity as found in the ancient creeds, the official expression of the faith of the ancient church. It is in the light of this position that we are to understand the significance of his title, *The Fundamental Christian Faith*.

But it is to be doubted whether the present

movement in the direction of church unity will be much helped by exegetical excursions whose aim is to show twentieth-century people what the second-, third-, or fourth-century people believed about still earlier times. And it may be seriously questioned whether Professor Briggs's classification of present theological tendencies will hold water. We think at once of many scholars who would object to being inserted either into the "reactionary," or the "radical," or the "wholesome irenic" pigeon-hole, as here defined. Are today's reactionaries merely those who seek to grind seventeenth-century grist? Are the radicals (i.e., those who try to go to the roots of things) merely those who would abolish all historic theology and put philosophy in its place? And are the irenic merely those who are content to tarry with the ancient historic creeds?

Professor Briggs has done much to vindicate the rights of scientific criticism in the domain of the Old Testament; and in view of his great services to biblical knowledge, it is hardly fair to ask that he do as much for the ever more pressing problem of Christian origins. It is a matter of great significance, however, that the present movement of New Testament scholarship, on the one hand, and the popular movement looking toward church unity, on the other, should be in effect combining to outflank precisely such endeavors after unity as that for which this book stands. According to Professor Briggs, the Christian faith is essentially a faith which centers in Jesus Christ, and which occupies itself, as does the Nicene Creed, in stressing and expounding the metaphysics of the personality of Jesus. But if we read aright the signs of the times, the tendency on the part of New Testament scholarship, and among the people of the church at large, is to regard "essential Christianity" as the functional reproduction of Jesus' own faith in God. While this book by Professor Briggs is an admirable example of pure scholarship, we can hardly feel its force as a theological irenicon for the awakening church.